MIKHAIL PRISHVIN

THE VISITORS

This morning visitors began to arrive. The first to come was a wagtail who ran over just to have a look at us.

The second to visit us was a crane, who landed on the opposite bank of the river in the yellow marsh and started strolling among the hummocks.

Then an osprey, a bird which lives on fish, came flying by. With a hooked beak and sharp yellow eyes it stopped in mid-air, wings flapping, to search for prey. A kite with a curved tail arrived and hovered high above.

A marsh harrier, a great egg lover, came flying by. As soon as it appeared, all the wagtails rushed after it like a swarm of mosquitoes. Soon they were joined by crows and many other birds who had been watching over their nests where they were hatching their little ones. This huge bird of prey looked miserable—such a giant put to flight by little birds.

A tireless cuckoo cuckooed in the pinewood.

A heron leapt out of some old dry reeds.

A yellow hammer swung chirping on a thin reed. A shrew squeaked from under the dry leaves.

When it got still warmer, bird-cherry leaves like tiny green-winged birds flew onto the bare twigs, like other visitors.

An early willow turned fluffy, a bee came flying over to it, a bumble-bee began to drone and the first butterfly folded its tiny wings.

A goose stretched out its long neck, filled its bill with water, then splashed it all over itself, scratching under each feather, its tail moving as if hinged. When it had finished washing and scrubbing, it raised its silver wet shining bill towards the sun and let out a cackle.

An adder coiled on a stone to dry itself.

A worried-looking furry fox made a brief appearance among the reeds.

And when we took away our cooking tent, yellow hammers appeared on the spot and started pecking at something. They were our last visitors for the day.

Mikhail Prishvin

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